

Honolulu Star-Bulletin

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Defer not till tomorrow to be wise.—Confucius.

FREE SUGAR SCARE AGAIN

Honolulu is going through its periodic state of panic because of a rumor that something is going to happen to the sugar tariff. The market is weakening, some of the brokers are apparently worried, and not a few of the holders of sugar securities are wearing anxious looks.

Now, in the opinion of this paper—an opinion shared, we happen to know, by not a few conservative, keen-thinking businessmen, there is no need to worry over the prospect of free sugar, and no use in worrying, anyway.

Champ Clark, speaker of the House, is reported to have declared for free sugar. William Jennings Bryan is reported to favor free sugar. Other Democratic leaders are talking free sugar. But the House is going to be a comparatively small factor in sugar-tariff legislation. The probabilities are good that the House will affirm its stand for free sugar by the passage of just another such bill as that which was voted of Democratic caucus last year, and the Democratic House only to be defeated by the Senate refusing to consider it. As a factor of politics, the House is virtually dead-free sugar again. But between the well-organized and perfected free sugar legislation there is still a Senate next. President Wilson. The Senate is not going to pass any free sugar bill, in the opinion of men who know the political game from the inside and outside. The House will pass a bill as a matter of making up for pre-election announcements from stump and of making political capital for future. The Senate, still strongly protectionist, still with a staunch Republican leadership, with Democrats from sugar states, will play better politics than the House, it will stand by the business interests.

It is very likely that the Democratic administration as a whole will do everything in its power to avoid a clash with the big business interests of the country. The most dangerous implement of power under the Democrats—Cleveland's last administration has been at the empty doorway, the idle workshop, laborers around the streets in search of work. The Democrats are as timid as guardians of a man's business. Their old doctrine of "rule in moderation" discredited among the masses, is expiated by many of their most workers, is touched only with extreme leniency to anyone in the party. With this nation-wide moderation, the senate and the president will, in measure of party preservation, not allow a tariff revision in industries that will suffer greatly by such revision.

Woodrow Wilson is not the type of statesman who will yield to popular clamor for free sugar. He knows that the economy is not going to get the benefit of free sugar. He knows that the sugar trust will get the benefit. He knows that the beet-sugar grower, the cane-sugar grower, men with their money and their livelihood, beet and cane sugar production, will suffer not the wealthy sugar trust. And repeatedly now becoming a candidate for president, Mr. Wilson has declared that under his administration no legitimate business interest shall suffer by tariff revision. Mr. Wilson, we feel confident, is the kind of man who would veto a free-sugar bill if it came to him. We feel equally confident he will get no free-sugar bill from the Congress that goes into power on March 4. The Senate will block it.

Turn now to Hawaii's situation. The physical condition of the plantations is excellent; dividends are large and regular; surpluses are great; good crops are in realization and in prospect. The territory is in good shape to meet moderate tariff revision. The leading sugarmen have stated that a cut of a fourth or a third in the tariff could be borne with equanimity; probably the plantations could bear up under slight greater reductions.

The Star-Bulletin does not pose as a prophet in making the prediction that Hawaii need not worry over free sugar, and that the present anxiety is unfounded. No prophetic powers are needed to make such a prediction. Common sense, the consensus of opinion among keen businessmen here, the news from the mainland—Champ Clark's political statements, but above all these elements go to make up a situation in which there is small need for unrest.

President Taft, it will be noticed, was able to issue a Thanksgiving proclamation on Nov. 7. Oyster Bay is now making a noise like a clam.